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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1925
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1449
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2273
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0541
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 000164

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS
SECDEF FOR USDP/ISA/AP P.IPSEN
NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: INDONESIAN GENERAL'S REMARKS ON DEMOCRACY CAUSE
STIR

REF: A. JAKARTA 0011

[B](#). 07 JAKARTA 3293

[C](#). 07 SURABAYA 0091

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Indonesia's new military commander caused a stir with a statement on January 24 that the country was "not ready for democracy." We checked the story. Though injudicious, the general's statement was accompanied by his affirmation of the military's political neutrality. The bottom line is that we do not see the commander's statements as an indication that the Indonesian military's support for democracy and civilian control is waning. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (U) "NOT READY FOR DEMOCRACY": Speaking at the conclusion of a two-day national retreat of the country's military leadership, recently appointed Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) commander (Panglima) General Djoko Santoso was quoted as saying that Indonesia was "not ready for democracy." Speaking about regional tensions resulting from several cases of unresolved election disputes, Santoso reportedly said that such developments "constitute an indication that we are not yet ready to practice democracy."

[3](#). (U) BANNER HEADLINE: The statement was trumpeted by Jakarta's leading English-language newspaper, The Jakarta Post, in front-page headlines. Other papers gave it relatively little play, with the exception of the country's leading Indonesian-language newspaper, Kompas, which discussed it in more nuanced language on page 5. Parsing this statement, Kompas paraphrased Santoso as suggesting that there were still elements in society which were not yet ready to support democracy. Both papers cited further comments by Santoso to the effect that while "political judgments are beyond the authority of the TNI, once conflict and anarchy reach the point where the unity of the nation is threatened, it becomes the responsibility of the TNI."

[4](#). (U) THE CONTEXT: Santoso made these remarks in the context of a discussion of the political conflict which has followed elections in South Sulawesi and North Maluku in the past month (see Refs). In South Sulawesi, where the dispute has left the post of governor vacant, President Yudhoyono recently appointed the TNI Assistant for Personnel, MG

Tanribali Lamo, as Acting Governor. Responding to questions about that appointment, Santoso said Lamo had been chosen for his neutrality and ability and had complied with the law in resigning from the TNI before taking the position.

15. (U) STAYING POLITICALLY NEUTRAL: Santoso also emphasized that the 2001 law (No. 15) allowing ex-military or ex-police personnel to fill civilian posts should not be misused to bring security forces back into politics, as they had been in the past. (Note: Santoso once held a seat in the national legislature before the military withdrew from politics IN 2004.) Santoso also underscored that the military would remain politically neutral in the 2009 elections and that the TNI leadership had decided to issue a booklet for distribution to all military personnel making this clear.

16. (C) INJUDICIOUS COMMENTS: Santoso's remarks on the country's readiness to implement democracy need to be understood in context. That said, they were injudicious at best, given the military's controversial past. Indonesian military leaders, including Santoso, have repeatedly affirmed the military's allegiance to democracy. It is also worth noting that other civilians leaders, not the least Vice President Kalla, have made observations similar to Santoso's. The bottom line is that we do not see the commander's statements--which have not been echoed by others in the TNI--as an indication that the Indonesian military's support for democracy and civilian control is waning.

HUME